

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

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Capitalist bosses plan permanent job loss

By Fred Goldstein

The loss of 651,000 more jobs in February and the jump in the official unemployment rate to 8.1 percent have produced important admissions in the capitalist press that every worker should pay close attention to.

The New York Times, one of the most important voices of U.S. big business in the United States and around the world, ran a lead story on March 7 showing that at least 650,000 jobs have been lost in each of the last three months—for a total of 4.4 million jobs in all since the downturn started in December 2007. In the last four months, 2.6 million jobs have disappeared.

But the important point of the story was the prominently placed quote from John E. Silvia, chief economist at Wachovia bank: “These jobs aren’t coming back,” said Silvia. “A lot of production either isn’t going to happen at all, or it’s going to happen somewhere other than the United States. There are going to be fewer stores, fewer factories, fewer financial services operations.”

“The acceleration,” concluded the Times, “has convinced some economists that, far from an ordinary downturn after which jobs will return, the contraction under way reflects a fundamental restructuring of the American economy.” [Editor’s note: This sentence was pulled from the story in the late edition of the Times. However, the headline still contained this phrase: “Experts See Rapid Drop as Sign of Permanent Restructuring.”]

The auto industry is cited as an example. Car sales have dropped from 17 million annually a few years ago to 9 million today. “Even if sales increase to 10 or 12 million, that still leaves a lot of unneeded factories,” said the Times. And Silvia put it bluntly: “That’s a lot of workers that are not coming back. That’s a lot of steel, a lot of rubber, a lot of suppliers that are not coming back.”

What overproduction means

The market for autos is not shrinking because people need fewer autos. On the contrary, tens of millions of workers without cars or with cars that are broken down, who live in rural areas or in areas with poor or no mass transportation, desperately need autos.

U.S. capitalism has built its transit system based upon highways and roads. The public transportation system has been starved at the behest of the auto bosses and the oil and tire industries. Consequently, in most areas of the U.S. an automobile is essential to get and keep a job, to shop, to visit, etc. But tens of millions of people earning low wages or who are jobless cannot afford to buy cars at a price that will give the auto barons a profit.

Capitalism is now suffering from a crisis of overproduction—not overproduction of what people need but of what can be sold at a profit. This is not only in the auto industry but in housing, commercial real estate, electronics, appliances and so on.

While there has been little talk about the growth in the permanent army of unemployed planned by the capitalist class, it is implied by their own predictions. In fact, as noted in Workers World of March 12, the Obama administration’s most optimistic scenario for a recovery of the economy—growth of 3.4 percent by 2010—still calculates that there would be 7.9 percent unemployment. In other words, the recovery would be a recovery for the capitalists but the workers will still be facing mass unemployment, approximately at the level it is today.

And this is the optimistic viewpoint!

This is a virtual admission, without saying so, that capitalism from now on cannot function without growing mass unemployment of a permanent character. Add to this the projection that 8 million people will be facing foreclosure in the next few years.

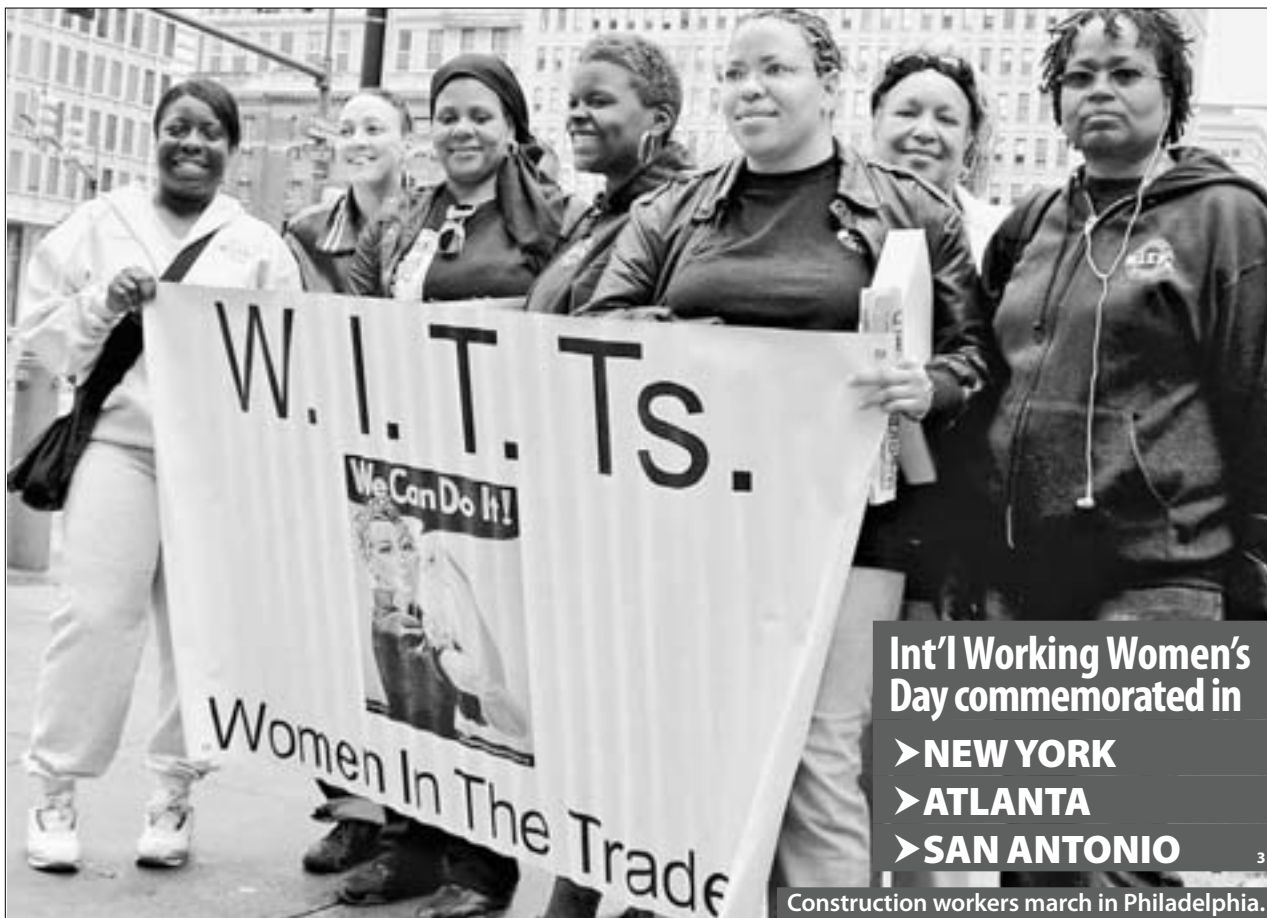
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IWD march hits war, economy, bigotry

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

For the second year in a row, the International Women’s Day Philadelphia Coalition has brought together women from diverse communities, cultures and struggles.

This year’s event included strong participation from Latina, Asian and Black women, as well as many activists from Philadelphia’s LGBT community. With the growing economic crisis hitting women the hardest, many speakers addressed social and economic justice issues, including the mortgage crisis, health care reform and the struggle to pass the Employee Free Choice Act.

Jaci Adams, representing Transgender Women of Color, spoke at a City Hall rally, noting that it was the first time she knew of in Philadelphia that a transgender woman was invited to speak at an IWD event. Helen Gym of Parents United for Public Education and Asian Americans United described her community’s fight

against attempts to build a gambling casino in Chinatown, already impacted by gambling addiction.

The rally featured many young women who presented the history of IWD and read from a resolution honoring the day passed by the Philadelphia City Council on March 6. Louise Francis of NOW addressed corporate greed and the drive for profits as the root causes of the mortgage and foreclosure crisis. The outdoor event was followed by a march to an indoor afternoon rally at the Family Planning Council office on South Broad Street.

After a ceremonial opening featuring Aztec drumming and dance by Fuego Nuevo from the Raíces Culturales Latinoamericanas and songs from the Anna Crusis Women’s Choir, Afghan activist Suraya Pakzad addressed the crowd. In 1988, this Afghan mother of six founded Voice of Women, one of only a few women’s nongovernmental organizations in Afghanistan.

Pakzad explained that while by law, women in

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Oppression breeds resistance

By Larry Hales

“The memory of oppressed people is one thing that cannot be taken away, and for such people, with such memories, revolt is always an inch below the surface.”

—Howard Zinn,
“A People’s History of the United States”

Resistance is the byproduct of oppression. With the first inkling of exploitation and oppression come the seeds of struggle to throw off those who would exploit and oppress.

In the Western Hemisphere, resistance to colonization began shortly after the arrival of Columbus, when the aims of his expedition became clear.

The story of the Western Hemisphere is one of the genocide of Indigenous people, from the very northern regions to the most southern, but also of the theft of land, the rape and the enslavement of African people.

From early Indigenous resistance to colonization, to the rebellion in 1516 of Indigenous slaves aboard a Spanish galleon, to one of the first recorded African slave rebellions in North America—the 1712 New York rebellion—the history of the Americas is filled with open, violent struggle.

But in relatively recent history the turbulent period most recalled took place in the second half of the 20th century.

The struggle for civil rights is characterized as a non-violent movement. However, it also employed other tactics, including armed self-defense against racist violence and police.

In the South, ultraright racist violence against free Blacks began immediately after slavery officially ended. Hundreds if not thousands of free Blacks were killed in 1865 alone. Carl Schurz, a German-born Northerner, who would later become secretary of the Interior and oversee the Office of Indian Affairs, pushing forward an agenda of forcing Indigenous people into Bantustans, documented the lynchings in his 1865 “Report on the Condition of the South.”

In the report he wrote: “The number of murders and assaults perpetrated upon Negroes is very great; we can form only an approximate estimate of what is going on in those parts of the South which are not closely garrisoned, and from which no regular reports are received, by what occurs under the very eyes of our military authorities. As to my personal experience, I will only mention that during my two days sojourn at Atlanta, one Negro was stabbed with fatal effect on the street, and three were poisoned, one of whom died. While I was at Montgomery, one Negro was cut across the throat evidently with intent to kill, and another was shot, but both escaped with their lives. Several papers attached to this report give an account of the number of capital cases that occurred at certain places during a certain period of time. It is a sad fact that the perpetration of those acts is not confined to that class of people which might be called the rabble.”

Schurz would later go on to help found the “Liberal Republicans,” who advocated the removal of federal troops from the South and self-government for Southern states. With the Compromise of 1877 and the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, Reconstruction officially ended and federal troops were removed from the South.

Paramilitary groups like the White League—allied with the Southern Democratic Party—which had already begun to spring up before Reconstruction, flourished when federal troops were removed. The Ku Klux Klan, founded in 1865 by Confederates, grew along with it.

The pbs.org Web site gives an account of an action by the White League: “On April 13, 1873, violence erupted in Colfax, Louisiana. The White League, a paramilitary group intent on securing white rule in Louisiana, clashed with Louisiana’s almost all-black state militia. The resulting death toll was staggering. Only three members of the White League died. But some one hundred black men were killed in the encounter.”

Violence against other oppressed people was just as intense. Indigenous people faced continued aggression and attempts to wipe out their population, steal their land and push them off land they had inhabited since long before the first settlers arrived in North America.

The massacre of Native people at Wounded Knee occurred in 1890 and over 300 people, mostly women, children and elderly people, were brutally killed by federal troops.

The federal government and local militias launched brutal assaults to force Native peoples off their land and waged countless wars, from those against the Seminole and Creek, fought mainly in Florida, to the theft of half of Mexico to expand slavery.

The conditions of war and oppression and repression continue to this day, but in the latter half of the 20th century, after hundreds of years of slavery, genocide and oppression, outright rebellions broke out in which the most oppressed used violence in self-defense.

Robert F. Williams was a strong advocate of self-defense who wrote “Negroes with Guns” and the pamphlet “Listen Brother”—to convince Black men not to fight in Vietnam. Williams started the journal “The Crusader” and was president of the NAACP chapter in Monroe, N.C., where he led many struggles against segregation.

When Black homes became targets of nighttime Klan attacks, he organized armed defense squads. Williams fled to Cuba in 1961 after trumped-up charges of “kidnapping” were filed against him and others in Monroe who had actually taken in an elderly white couple for a few hours to protect them during a tense standoff in the streets. The white couple was unhurt. It was the Black community that was being threatened by white racists.

It was another clear illustration that the U.S. government opposed the right of the oppressed to defend themselves, while abetting racist violence.

Williams said, “It is a universally known fact that the power structure of the racist USA is rabidly opposed to self-defense on the part of our people.”

Next: More on the history of the open struggle of the oppressed.

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO

Dima Abisaab from Al-Awda, NYC.



Stella D'oro striker Sara Rodriguez.

INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY

A LEGACY OF RESISTANCE, SOLIDARITY

March unites issues impacting women

By Brenda Ryan
New York

Hundreds of women, along with male supporters, rallied at Union Square and then marched together on March 8 to commemorate International Women's Day. They called for "a bailout of women and our communities," not the banks, in the U.S. and worldwide.

Under the theme, "Every issue is a woman's issue," speakers noted the fight to keep their homes in the face of massive foreclosures and evictions, to stop the attacks and deportation of immigrant workers, to end wars and occupations abroad and the need to strengthen reproductive justice.

Brenda Stokely, a leader of the Million Worker March Movement, and Valerie Francisco of Filipinas for Rights and Empowerment (FiRE) chaired the rally. Stokely called on everyone to become an organizer: "Ask yourselves, 'What am I doing?' You need to be an organizer and build solidarity. The only thing the opposition listens to is a mighty front. They don't listen to petitions. They don't listen to lobbying."

Sara Rodriguez of the striking Stella D'oro workers noted that women are most affected by this six-month-old strike against the cookie company. In addition to eliminating 12 sick days, a week of vacation and six holidays, the company is also cutting hourly pay for table packers, 80 percent being women.

Representatives of the Women's Inter-

national Democratic Federation spoke about the struggle in Latin America and Dima Abisaab from Al-Awda called for an end to the occupation of Palestine.

Other speakers included Christine White, a transit worker from Take Back Our Union; New York State Assemblyperson Inez Barron; health care worker Joyce Chediak, who noted hospital cutbacks that are particularly hurting immigrants; Vickie White, People's Organization

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WW PHOTOS: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

March 8, NYC.

Support immigrant sisters behind bars

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Gadsden, Ala.

Emotions ran high as four women, dressed in drab green prison clothes, entered a conference room at the Etowah County Detention Center in this northern Alabama town on March 7 to the cheers and applause of a group of immigrant rights activists, legal workers and family members. Tears immediately began to flow as the detainees realized these 13 women and two men had all come to visit them, to hear of their situation, to offer whatever help they could and to bring them sorely needed personal items



PHOTO: MARY BABINGTON

Delegation visits women's prison in Alabama.

to ease the distress of prison conditions.

A fifth young woman, originally from Chiapas, Mexico, soon joined the group.

Her story was indicative of the quixotic results of the current unjust immigration policies in the U.S. Employed by a temp

agency in metro Atlanta, often working in manufacturing plants, she was called to come pick up her checks at the agency office. However, when she arrived, she was immediately arrested for using a false so-

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Latina workers march for equality



PHOTO: ESPERANZA CENTER

Special to Workers World
San Antonio

Local Mexicana/Chicana women gave a strong working-class and combat-ready tone to the International Women's Day March in San Antonio. The march challenged the city's new rule making marches illegal. However, with nearly 500 people participating this March 7, they were able to hold the march without incident.

The Southwest Workers Union had a strong presence. The march took off with protesters holding a picture of Emma Tenayuca, a labor leader in the 1930s

class struggle who was originally a high-school student in San Antonio. Tenayuca had joined the Finck cigar strike of 1933 at the age of 16, was jailed for her union activity, and played a strong role in the pecan shellers' strike in 1939.

The Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, Fuerza Unida, the Martinez Young Women's Center, and the San Antonio Stonewall Democrats organized the march. At a march-ending rally, speakers explained the importance of the day and the struggle for gender equality and freedom of sexuality. □

IWD march hits war, economy, bigotry

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Afghanistan have the right to go to school, to work and to walk on the streets, real practices concerning women haven't changed. Every 13 minutes a woman in Afghanistan dies in childbirth and many children do not survive to their fifth birthday.

Other speakers included Kathy Black of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and U.S. Labor Against the War, who said women are disproportionately the victims of war, of suffering in countries under occupation and from the economic impact of a wartime economy and suffering as soldiers subject to sexual abuse and rape.

Pattie Eakin, president of the Pennsylvania Association of Nurses and Allied Professionals, spoke on the need to pass HB 676 for Universal Single Payer Healthcare. She noted that, because of lack of health care, women in the U.S. are far more likely to die from childbirth due

to medical complications than women in 32 other countries.

Focusing her remarks on the importance of passing the Employee Free Choice Act, Roni Green of SEIU spoke on the conditions working women face in today's near-depression economy. "It's a race to the bottom," she noted, referring to the decline in wages and employee benefits. "Women need union protection to fight for a livable wage, health care and a guaranteed pension."

Green described conditions for women working at Wal-Mart who are paid minimum wage and must rely on government programs for health care and food stamps. She noted, "During his election campaign Obama was attacked for suggesting 'a redistribution of the wealth.' But workers are the ones who create the wealth and we're only asking for what is ours. The fight for the Employee Free Choice Act may be one of the most important struggles in the upcoming period." □

Health care reform— how can workers get it?

By David Hoskins

The health care crisis facing workers in the U.S. is severe. Fifty million people lack health insurance and another 25 million are underinsured.

The federal government estimates that the country will spend \$2.5 trillion on health care this year. That amounts to an average of \$8,160 per person for a system that neglects to provide adequate care for one in four people. The right wing is digging in against even incremental reform with their opposition to pharmaceutical price controls and public plans that compete with private insurers.

Two of the country's largest labor unions, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and the Service Employees International Union, recently announced their withdrawal from a major national coalition for health care reform. The coalition, known as the Healthcare Reform Dialogue, includes an eclectic mix of major drug and insurance companies, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, labor organizations and advocacy groups for patients, consumers and health care professionals.

The group was tasked with finding common ground on major changes to

the health care system. The coalition is headed by the president of the American Hospital Association—an anti-labor industry group representing private hospitals and providers. AFSCME and SEIU withdrew after failing to gain support for modest proposals, such as requiring employers to contribute to the cost of coverage for workers.

Labor's exit from this coalition shows that collaborating with the big pharmaceutical and insurance corporations responsible for the current crisis in health care is a dead end. Industry representatives are instinctively opposed to even moderate reforms because their pursuit of corporate profits demands the rationing of care based on a patient's ability to pay. Labor must gear up for a serious fight if the interests of workers are to be represented in this most recent battle for health care reform.

President Barack Obama has announced Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius as his pick for secretary of Health and Human Services. Obama's announcement comes as his administration begins to roll out his plan for health care reform. The selection of Sebelius has been widely praised by the corporate media, while at the same time many activists have start-

ed to question her commitment to universal health care. Her appointment was welcomed by the insurance industry and Republicans who see her as a moderate pro-business Democrat capable of tamping down demand for genuine reform.

What's in health care plan

The administration's proposed health care plan is an endeavor to expand health insurance by expanding government programs while reining in costs. It represents an incremental approach that postpones universal coverage to an uncertain future date.

The plan prohibits private insurers from denying anyone coverage, regardless of medical history, and provides subsidies to help low-income workers purchase health insurance. The proposal would also allow people to buy into a new public insurance program instead of purchasing private coverage.

However, workers need a plan that provides quality care to everyone who needs it, regardless of their ability to pay—especially as more and more jobs are disappearing.

Physicians for a National Health Plan estimates that of the 50 million uninsured in the U.S., at least 15 million will go uncovered if Congress passes this version of health care reform. The fundamental flaw

with the plan is that it seeks to solve the health care crisis by selling insurance.

A bill already exists in Congress to establish a single-payer system of health insurance. The legislation is popularly known as "Medicare for All" (H.R. 676). Passage of this progressive legislation is not a cure-all for the capitalist health care system, which is based on the medical industry profiting off illness, but it would represent a big victory for workers.

Every person living in or visiting the U.S. would be eligible for coverage under H.R. 676. The proposed program covers primary care, emergency care, prescription drugs, mental health services and long-term care. Dental and eye care, inpatient and outpatient care, and durable medical equipment are also covered. The patient is not charged any co-pays or deductibles, and private insurers are prohibited from selling coverage that duplicates the benefits covered by the act.

The April 3-4 national march on Wall Street provides an opportunity for labor to start engaging workers to build a broad fightback program. The march will demand that the government "bail out the people, not the banks" on the 41st anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. The people certainly need health care more than the banks need another government handout. □

Workers, students rally against budget cuts



CUNY students at New York rally.

WWW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

By Mary Owen
New York

The alarming prospect of deep budget and service cutbacks, layoffs and the closing of hospitals and other workplaces brought tens of thousands of workers into the streets near New York's City Hall March 5 for a monster "Rally for New York." The gigantic outpouring of throngs of union and community protesters lasted for hours and stretched for blocks and blocks in lower Manhattan.

Simultaneous protests in Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and other cities in New York state also drew large worker-community crowds demanding, "No cuts! No cuts! No cuts!"

The New York City rally was called by the One New York coalition to protest proposals by the state government to unload a \$15 billion budget deficit on the backs of workers and their communities by drastically cutting health care, education and

other vital services, jobs and pensions. They were also protesting city government plans for similar cutbacks.

The coalition includes the NYC Central Labor Council, the New York State AFL-CIO, unions representing teachers and educators, city and state employees, building service, health care and other workers, and more than 100 community groups and non-profit social service providers.

The demands at the NYC protest were moderate: a tax on millionaires, no service cuts at a time of need, don't make workers pay for Wall Street's economic crisis, and hands off our schools, child-care, health care and jobs. But the outpouring of workers in this city and statewide who are ready to fight back—the protest here was infused with the energy of young workers and students, especially women and workers of color—seemed to surpass even the organizers' expectations and bodes well for future struggles. □

Students demand food

By Caleb T. Maupin
Berea, Ohio

Richard Durst, president of Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, claims to have served in Vietnam alongside Bob Kerrey, the president of New School University. Both went on orders from the U.S. government to repress the Vietnamese people and their resistance.

Durst and Kerrey are once again repressing justified resistance—this time from students at the institutions of higher education they have directed.

New School students who opposed Kerrey's policies occupied the cafeteria for 30 hours in December. The students demanded more involvement in decision making and recognition of the campus workers' union. The students' demands were met and Kerrey resigned from his post as interim-provost.

Durst is now the target of a campaign organized by B-W students for a basic human right: the right to eat. Instead of having a meal plan, like most colleges in the U.S., through which students are assured three decent meals a day, Baldwin-Wallace deposits an amount of money on a campus debit card known as the Jacket Express Card.

When this money runs out, students must pay out of their own pockets for any additional expenses. Financial aid cannot legally cover the additional costs. Students are expected to eat for \$4 a day.

If the food prices were reasonable, this would be realistic, but they aren't. The director of auxiliary services at B-W, David Jensen, even confirmed in an e-mail that the average cost of purchases during meal times is sometimes as high as \$5.56 and this average includes students who buy only beverages or single items.

Students whose cards have run out and whose parents do not have the resources to add more money have had to steal food. The response of the college to the

food stealing has been punishment. When some concerned students approached the cafeteria regarding the problem, they were told that the youth needed to "take responsibility for their actions" and that the \$4 allowance was somehow reasonable.

In response, several students—including three members of the B-W chapter of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST)—formed the Baldwin-Wallace Food Justice Council. The group recruited using the Internet and, within 48 hours of announcing its existence, had 142 online supporters, all of whom were B-W students, faculty or alumni.

Members of the council got unanimous support when they distributed leaflets to other students face to face. Students happily grabbed stacks of leaflets to give to their friends. Every dorm on the campus was covered.

Attempts were made on the Internet to redbait one of the group's founders for being an "anti-Zionist communist." This failed to stop the group's growing support. The council still maintains over 140 members on Facebook.

A meeting has been called for March 19 at 9 p.m. in Ernsthansen Hall at Baldwin-Wallace at which students will discuss plans to challenge President Durst when he gives his address on the college budget at an upcoming date. A petition is being circulated among the student body that will be delivered to the campus authorities in a future mass demonstration.

The B-W Food Justice Council has also unanimously voted to endorse the Bail Out the People marches on Wall Street on April 3 and 4.

Just as the Vietnamese people drove Durst and his fellow imperialist occupiers out of Vietnam, the Baldwin-Wallace Food Justice Council hopes to be victorious and win the basic right to eat for the students at Baldwin-Wallace College.

The Food Justice Council can be contacted at foodjusticebw@gmail.com. □

Protest at jail for immigrant families

By Gloria Rubac
Taylor, Texas

Texas activists carrying colorful signs and banners formed a loud, militant demonstration in front of the T. Don Hutto Residential Facility on March 7, chanting, “CCA [Corrections Corporation of America], shut it down!” “Free the children, shut it down!” and “ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement], shut it down!”

Called a “residential facility,” Hutto is actually a for-profit prison surrounded by high fences topped with barbed wire. Some 125 children and their families are incarcerated there waiting for hearings on political asylum or deportation. None has been convicted of any crime.

The Department of Homeland Security opened the 510-bed facility in May 2006 as the first detention center for families. It is operated by the Corrections Corporation of America in conjunction with Williamson County, which is located just north of the Texas state capital in Austin.

The demonstration was called by Students for a Democratic Society at the University of Houston and supported by Texan activists from the cities of Taylor, Georgetown, Austin, Houston and College

Station. This was the second year in a row that International Women’s Day has been marked in front of this prison demanding an end to the detention of children and families.

SDS organizer Rob Block led chants and introduced the speakers, including four young children from Austin who are members of A Scouts, an alternative to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. The children were working to earn their “protest badge” by attending the Hutto demonstration. The A Scouts used colored sidewalk chalk to decorate the prison’s main driveway with pictures and slogans such as “Free the kids!” and “No more kids behind bars!”

Natalie, an SDS member and a Palestinian American, spoke of the horrific conditions at immigration detention centers, from lack of medical care and food to physical abuse. “My significant other was locked in one of these prisons and they are no place for anyone, especially children,” she told the crowd.

During the protest two CCA employees sat in a van blocking the main entrance to the prison. One speaker addressed the woman in the driver’s seat: “How can you work at this place where women are abused and raped? I am asking you how



March at Hutto immigration prison.
WW PHOTO GLORIA RUBAC

you can be a part of this,” she yelled over the microphone. The CCA employee responded by rolling up the van windows.

Before the protest ended, the crowd of more than 50 people marched about 300 yards from the front of the prison to the side, where they could view some swings for the children. Their chants and speeches could be heard for quite a distance.

The children’s swings and other improvements were made after a successful lawsuit by the Texas ACLU in 2007. Conditions at Hutto have gradually improved as a result of the groundbreaking

litigation. Children are no longer required to wear prison uniforms and are allowed much more time outdoors. Educational programming has expanded and guards have been instructed not to discipline children by threatening to separate them from their parents.

As the protest was ending, chants of “¡En las luchas obreras, no hay fronteras!” (“In the workers’ struggles, there are no borders!”) could be heard loud and clear.

The next protest at this prison will be on April 18. For information, see tdon-hutto.blogspot.com. □

Legal briefs support Mumia and Cuban Five

By Cheryl LaBash

The U.S. Supreme Court got a glimpse of the strong support for Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Cuban Five--Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, René González and Ramón Labañino--when friend-of-the-court legal documents were filed March 5 and 6 on behalf of these six internationally known political prisoners.

The U.S. Supreme Court hears oral arguments on as few as 100 cases per year, although thousands are submitted. The briefs submitted support a full examination of the legal issues in both cases.

Racism in jury selection and the right of defendants to a fair trial are at the center of both appeals. Abu-Jamal and the Cuban Five were prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned for political reasons.

Abu-Jamal, imprisoned for more than 27 years, is a noted African-American journalist who dared to be “the voice of the voiceless,” defending the MOVE organization and Philadelphia’s African-American community against the racist police. The state of Pennsylvania continues to push to execute Abu-Jamal, despite evidence of police coercion of witnesses and even a sworn confession from another person.

On March 5, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) filed a friend of the court brief supporting Abu-Jamal’s “claim of racial discrimination in the selection of the jury for his 1981 death penalty trial.” The first African-American Supreme Court justice, Thurgood Marshall, was also the first director-counsel of the Legal Defense Fund, which was founded in 1940 to “assist African Americans in securing their rights through the prosecution of lawsuits.” (naacpldf.org)

The LDF’s blog, thedefendersonline.org, lays out some of the blatant evidence of racism in the Philadelphia prosecutor’s office toward Abu-Jamal’s case, including a video of Jack McMahon, then a Philadelphia assistant district attorney, offering strategies on how to exclude jurors of color. The LDF’s brief and additional information on the fight to free Abu-Jamal are at www.millions4mumia.org.

On March 6, 12 separate friend-of-the-court briefs were filed urging the Supreme

Court to hear the case of the Cuban Five. According to a press release from attorney Thomas Goldstein, it is “the largest number of amicus briefs ever to have urged the Supreme Court to review a criminal conviction.” The documents represent 10 human rights Nobel Prize winners; hundreds of international parliamentarians; the Mexican Senate; Mary Robinson, former U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights and former president of Ireland; the National Jury Project; the National Lawyers Guild; the National Conference of Black Lawyers; the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers-Miami Chapter; Cuban-American scholars; and more. A detailed summary and link to the complete texts can be found at www.thecuban5.org.

The briefs distill the deep international support for the five Cuban men, who came to the United States to monitor Florida-based paramilitary organizations plotting to carry out violent attacks on Cuba

during the 1990s. Many local and national committees, including the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five, relentlessly organized to make this case known in a determined uphill effort to pierce the wall of media silence inside the U.S.

A March 3 letter from the 56,000-member Canadian Union of Postal Workers to President Barack Obama said: “Recent history has shown that terrorist attacks have been planned and launched from the United States against the Cuban people for many years. There was no real effort by U.S. authorities to prevent this and much evidence that your security services aided and abetted these crimes. The crime of these Cuban Five men was to investigate and report planned terrorist attacks that were directed against the people of Cuba. At no time did these individuals seek or obtain military secrets. Their only goal was to protect their people from more death originating from south Florida.

“These men have been further punished. While there is no evidence they are anything but model prisoners, they have been held in solitary for long periods. Two of the five have been denied visits from their spouses. We see no value in this cruel punishment, no gain in security for the United States and serious damage to your credibility as a nation founded on law.”

Although these important cases are up for consideration by the U.S. Supreme Court, the struggle in the streets is where the decisions will finally be won. As Robert Bryan, Abu-Jamal’s attorney, wrote, “This is a life and death struggle to save Mumia. He is in greater danger than at any time since being arrested. Your support and activism is needed. That Mumia remains in prison and on death row is an affront to basic human rights. We must aggressively continue this struggle until he is free.” (www.millions4mumia.org)

Free Mumia! Free the Cuban Five! □

Militant rallies defend same-sex marriage

By Page Getz
San Francisco

Several thousand protesters gathered in front of San Francisco City Hall March 5 as the marriage rights struggle made its way to the California Supreme Court.

The fate of 18,000 same-sex marriages performed last year hangs on the seven justices’ pending decision on the constitutionality of Proposition 8, a ballot initiative banning same-sex marriage that voters passed in November by 52 percent. The initiative amended the California Constitution to establish that “only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.”

Though the atmosphere among the protesters outside was optimistic during the hearing, the climate inside was tense. This same court ruled last year that it was unconstitutional to prohibit same-sex marriage, but it is now forced to face a voter-amended constitution.

Last May, the court had ruled 4-3 to repeal both a same-sex marriage ban passed by the state legislature in 1977 and Proposition 22, approved by vot-

ers in 2000. One month later, California began issuing same-sex marriage licenses, from June 16 to Nov. 5, the day after Proposition 8 was approved in the state referendum.

Attorneys against Proposition 8 argued that to use the amendment process to rob a civil right from a group of people was not the intent of the constitution.

A large crowd of militant lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer (LGBTQ) rights activists from all over the state faced off with Proposition 8 supporters on the steps outside the courthouse as lawyers from both sides filtered through the crowds. The three hours of oral arguments could be watched on a giant screen across the street. A much smaller group of several hundred, who mostly came on buses from Sacramento churches, was there to support the ban.

The night before the hearing, thousands marched from the Castro district to San Francisco City Hall for a candlelit vigil in support of marriage rights. Participants included local lawmakers and Stuart Milk, nephew of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay San Francisco supervisor, who

was assassinated in office. Many camped overnight outside the Civic Center to await the hearing.

If the measure is overturned, California will be one of only three states, including Connecticut and Massachusetts, to legalize same-sex marriage.

The marriage rights struggle continues to be fought from the streets and in other state legislatures, including legislation in Minnesota and Hawaii that would redefine marriage and civil unions.

During the March 5 hearing, justices considered allowing the 18,000 couples already given marriage licenses to remain married, while still upholding Proposition 8. Opponents say such a division could potentially be grounds for an appeal under the federal equal protection clause.

No decision has been issued yet, though the mainstream media is predicting the court will rule in favor of upholding the ban, based on statements made by some of the justices. The court has 90 days to make a decision.

Proposition 8 has galvanized LGBTQ communities across the country, prompting solidarity rallies in several cities. □

Auction of foreclosed homes draws protest

By John Catalinotto
New York

No event is so tragic that U.S. financiers and brokers won't look for a way to make money from it. It's a relief when someone exposes them for the vultures they are.

Millions of homes are being foreclosed around the country. The Real Estate Disposition Corporation is joyful about its prospect for profits this year. REDC cleared \$3 billion in profits in 2008. This year it expects to run three home auctions in the New York area alone, where last year it held none.

REDC has "the ignominious reputation of being the largest private foreclosed homes auctioneer in the world," according to a release by the Bail Out the People Movement.



Charles Jenkins, union activist.

REDC scheduled its first such all-day auction March 8 at the vast Javits Center on Manhattan's West 35th Street. BOPM called a news conference and picket early that morning outside the center to protest this latest assault on the poor. Those who came out represented community groups, unions and progressive elected officials fighting the foreclosure plague.

Joy Nayo Simmons, chief of staff for New York City Council member Charles Barron, backed the protest and represented the progressive Black political leader.

BOPM spokesperson Larry Holmes called the picketers "freedom fighters." He said their intervention had successfully changed the message of the event from "How can people get a bargain buying a home?" to "What happened to the families who were foreclosed on?"

"Are these people being bailed out, as is Bank of America and AIG?" he asked. "The answer is no."

Holmes' group has called for a demonstration on Wall Street at 1 p.m. on April 3.

The theme of the April 3 march is "Bail out people, not banks," said Holmes, adding, "We consider the housing crisis at the center of our work, and when we march on Wall Street we will demand a national moratorium on foreclosures and evictions."

New York unionist Chris Silvera, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 808 and active in many progressive causes, spoke up for the foreclosed homeowners and called attention to the still-dispossessed former residents of New Orleans, the Katrina survivors.



WW PHOTOS: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Joy Simmons, a Brooklyn housing activist, speaks at March 8 protest.

Sharon Black, facing a possible foreclosure herself on her Baltimore home, told how a popular struggle in Baltimore had convinced the City Council there to propose a year-long moratorium on foreclosures in that overwhelmingly working-class and majority African-American city. "Only three council members out of 14 did not sign on to sponsor the bill," Black said. She asked for support from everyone at a March 24 council hearing to discuss the bill.

Brenda Stokely, from the Million Workers March, called on activists to keep on organizing as the crisis hits more and more people around the country. Charles Jenkins, a labor activist from Take Back Our Union, also spoke at the short rally ending the protest.

Without the BOPM protest, media coverage would have been limited to showing happy new homeowners and even happier brokers from REDC. Instead, it reflected the potential for a fightback. □

Capitalist bosses plan permanent job loss

Continued from page 1

This makes it clear that the bosses, the bankers, the mortgage brokers and Wall Street in general are planning to deepen the war on the working class and the oppressed. And it is equally clear that the workers must gear up, get organized and plan a counteroffensive against this brutal campaign of layoffs, foreclosures, evictions and cutbacks.

Perfect storm engulfs the globe

The present crisis is a global crisis. U.S. capitalism is the center of world capitalism. It is financially, industrially and militarily dominant and every thread in the world capitalist economy is tied in some way to Wall Street—from Berlin to Bangkok, from Mumbai to Manila, from Rome to Rio. All the symptoms now exhibited in the U.S. are being reproduced worldwide, often on an even more drastic scale.

The present crisis represents a perfect economic storm in which the factors of long-term growth that have propelled U.S. capitalism forward over the last 70 years have gone into reverse. But unlike a perfect storm in nature, which is random, this perfect storm is driven by the fundamental contradictions of the predatory capitalist profit system of exploitation.

Private property has come into extreme contradiction with the vast socialized apparatus of global production created by capital itself in pursuit of profit. The system can no longer be propped up by violent militarism and other artificial means, as it has in the past.

The growth of militarism, the scientific-technological revolution, the globalization

of capitalist exploitation and superexploitation, the creation of fictitious capital and credit, the relentless pauperization of the working class—all these factors artificially kept capitalist accumulation and profits going for generations after the Great Depression. But now they have run their course.

Wars used to stimulate economy

How did U.S. capitalism emerge from the collapse of the Depression and sustain itself for 70 years? The fundamental turning point was World War II. After the 1929 to 1933 crisis subsided, there was an upturn in 1934 which lasted until October of 1937. But then came a profound second crash that frightened the Roosevelt administration and the ruling class.

World War II was the historic turning point that opened up a new phase of U.S. capitalist development. It choked off a prerevolutionary development among the working class in a period of furious class struggle and restarted a moribund system.

There was a turn toward war preparation, the beginning of the militarization of the economy. Then came the war itself. The massive war production—tanks, jeeps, planes, ships, uniforms, food, etc.—restarted capitalism. When the smoke cleared, more than 50 million people were dead. Europe and much of Asia were in ruins. Massive means of production had been destroyed as well as residential buildings, bridges, railroads, roads, dams, canals, ports and so forth.

In the period since World War II, U.S. capitalism has relied on various artificial methods to keep the system from collaps-

ing. War and war preparation were a basic stimulant for decades during the post-war period. The Korean War, the Vietnam War, the military buildup during the Cold War—all served to generate capitalist production and profits, as the system could not rely on the civilian economy to automatically keep it going. But by the end of the 1980s, even the \$2 trillion Reagan military buildup in a "full court press" to undermine the Soviet Union and the socialist camp was insufficient to sustain capitalist prosperity.

The continuous development of the scientific-technological revolution, the restructuring of capitalist industry, the relentless anti-labor campaign of union-busting, extracting concessions, destroying benefits, driving down manufacturing wages and steadily expanding the low-wage service economy—all this enormously increased inequality in the national income in favor of capital at the expense of the workers. All this served to bolster profitability for the bosses and bankers.

The collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe in the 1990s and the opening up of China to capitalist investment gave imperialism a brief period of unprecedented global expansion. The monopolies seized this opportunity to create global networks of exploitation and vast superprofits as they engineered a worldwide wage competition among the international working class and promoted a vicious race to the bottom.

The structure of globalized production has now turned into an epidemic of globalized layoffs and mass unemployment, from Eastern Europe to the Baltic states, from

east and south Asia to Latin America.

To keep the system going, militarism, technological development and anti-labor attacks were supplemented by borrowing, financial injections to save banks and corporations, speculation, credit bubbles, mortgage schemes, exotic financial instruments and all manner of fraudulent schemes to make profits based on trading in fictitious capital.

Crisis deepens despite militarism

In the present crisis, none of these measures are available to restart the system in any significant way. The two wars underway are draining the coffers of U.S. imperialism. Overall militarization has largely been accomplished.

New rounds of military development are technology intensive, such as laser-guided bombs, satellite-guided missiles, predator drones, high-tech missile ships and fighter planes. Current imperialist wars are limited and heavily dependent on air power.

Although the trillion dollars (open and hidden) spent annually on the military is essential to the system, the size of the capitalist economy has grown and any significant stimulus through military expansion would have to be on a much greater scale than is possible at the moment.

Only a massive war mobilization on a vast scale for a catastrophic military adventure could hold the prospect of diverting the crisis. This long-run danger to all humanity is inherent in this crisis.

The long period of creating low-wage capitalism, with a working class in debt and living closer and closer to the poverty

The U.S. Department of the Treasury on March 4 announced aspects of the “Making Home Affordable Program,” the much-heralded plan of the Obama administration to stem home mortgage foreclosures. The plan’s guidelines were pursuant to the Economic Stabilization Act which created the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP), wherein the Treasury secretary was mandated to create a program for loan modifications to help homeowners avoid foreclosure. Relief is desperately needed so that people can remain in their homes. More than 1 in 11 homeowners in the U.S. are currently in default on their loans. More than 3 million foreclosures occurred in the U.S. last year. Many adjustable rate mortgages—a usurious

lever used in racist, sexist subprime loans—are due to reset to higher interest levels in April. It has been projected that 2009 will be the worst year since the crisis began in the number of people losing their homes to foreclosure. Millions of homeowners and residents facing foreclosure and eviction are hoping and expecting that the Obama-Treasury plan will afford them relief so they can stay in their homes. However, according to Detroit attorney Jerry Goldberg, who fights foreclosures and evictions on behalf of homeowners and renters, “The plan must be seriously amended in order to be truly effective and not be just another announcement that generates false expect-

tations, like the Hope for Home Ownership plan initiated July 30, 2008, which has afforded relief to only 25 homeowners rather than the 400,000 initially projected by the federal government.” Goldberg is helping the Michigan-based Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions and the national Bail Out the People Movement in launching a petition campaign to demand the Treasury Department modify the plan to help homeowners in a meaningful way and place a moratorium on foreclosures to allow the plan to work. Goldberg has studied the Treasury plan and he spoke to Workers World about the severe defects it currently has.

Government housing plan

Will foreclosures be stopped?

By Kris Hamel

Workers World: Describe the main details of the plan.

JG: The bill has two sections to it. One is for home refinancing for individuals who are current in their mortgage loans and have been current for the past 12 months. It applies only to Fannie Mae- and Freddie Mac-backed loans. It provides for reduction of principal on an extremely limited basis: the value of a loan has to be within 105 percent of the current value of the property. But with the current dramatic decline in home values, this 105 percent loan-to-value limit cuts out virtually every homeowner from potential refinancing based on a reduction in principal.

It is the financial institutions that were responsible for the housing price bubble with their inflated appraisals and fraudulent lending practices. The lenders are often paid for the full value of these inflated notes either through the Federal Housing Administration, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, private mortgage insurance or “forced insurance” on vacated homes.

The program needs to provide for refinancing of homes at their current net values so that homeowners can remain in their homes and to stabilize communities and property values. The refinancing must apply across-the-board to every bank and financial institution receiving federal funds of any kind. This would also be consistent with section 1403 of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act, which mandates loan modifications and workout plans where the net value is greater than the value of the home under foreclosure.

WW: What is the second part of the plan?

JG: The second part of the bill deals with loan modifi-

cations. The biggest question is to whom it will apply. In the most optimistic view, it appears it will apply to any loan servicer for a lender that receives Financial Stability Funds (TARP funds) moving forward, that is, from this day on. It also applies to other servicers and lenders that voluntarily choose to enter the program. But experience with voluntary plans has been disastrous.

Considering that already hundreds of banks and financial institutions have received TARP funds, the plan doesn’t seem to mandate institutions that have already received the funds to carry out modifications—a huge loophole that lets the banks off the hook after receiving literally trillions of dollars in workers’ tax money.

The plan must be modified to be mandatory for any financial institution that receives or received tax dollars. The law mandating the Treasury secretary to formulate modifications was contained in the original TARP bill, 12 USC 5219, and thus the financial institutions were on notice of their required compliance with the Treasury guidelines for loan modifications when they each received their billions in bailout funds.

WW: Does the plan as it was announced help anyone?

JG: The modifications for those servicers and lenders that subscribe to the plan could potentially provide fairly significant modifications in that monthly payments will be required to be no more than 31 percent of gross income and includes taxes and insurance on the home. The lenders are required to reduce the interest rate to as low as 2 percent to achieve this figure.

But the issue is implementation. And which banks are going to voluntarily abide by it? The government will not be doing the modifications; they will be done

through the servicers and they are not set up to carry out a program like this. The onus is put on the borrower to pursue it, but experience has shown how difficult it is to even get through to a lender or servicer. Right now there is no mechanism in place to even handle the volume of calls from borrowers.

WW: What should the plan include?

JG: If the Obama administration were really serious, wouldn’t the first step be a moratorium on foreclosures to give the plan a chance to be effectuated and tested? And wouldn’t it be mandatory for lenders?

It is illegal and unconscionable that individuals will continue losing their homes because lending institutions ignore federal mandates to modify their loans and refinance their homes. Without such a moratorium homeowners continue to be at the mercy of the predatory and unscrupulous financial institutions that have caused the foreclosure epidemic and the subsequent economic catastrophe.

The plan should also factor in a homeowner’s expenses in maintaining a home by including the monthly costs of heat, electricity, water and other utilities. The goal should be to keep people in their homes with mortgages and costs that are affordable given an individual’s income.

The plan strengthens the argument for a moratorium—that until the plan is more fully developed and it’s tested, there should be a moratorium on foreclosures in effect. We need to continue to demand the moratorium and demand the Treasury Department hold public hearings on the plan and change it in order to truly stop the millions of foreclosures still on the horizon. □

level, has intensified. As this trend deepens it only further aggravates the crisis of overproduction by further reducing the buying power of the masses.

And, of course, the credit option has completely run its course as a mechanism for reviving capitalist accumulation on a vast scale.

The recent period of technological development has raised the cost of capital and made it so productive that the last recovery of 2002 to 2004, following the dot-com technology bust, was a “jobless recovery” during which almost 600,000 jobs were lost! This is what led the banks and the Federal Reserve, with the complicity of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Treasury Department, to foster the housing bubble.

Capitalism has reached a point where, even if the trillions of dollars that the ruling class is spending in an attempt to mitigate the crisis were to result in a revival, it would be weak and short lived, leaving many millions unemployed. Capitalism is entering a period of permanent and deepening crisis for the masses.

In the present crisis the historic methods of reviving the profitability of capitalism, of restoring capitalist

accumulation and prosperity, appear to have run their course, as they did leading up to the Great Depression. This is what has the ruling class running scared.

Working class leaders, labor leaders, community organizers and activists in all spheres must come to grips with the prospect that there is no way out of the crisis except for mass intervention and mass struggle.

The multinational working class must interfere with the automatic processes of capitalist crisis. The layoffs must be stopped. The foreclosures and evictions must be stopped. The wage cuts and short hours must be stopped. Food must be available for all, no matter what. Medical care must be made available to the masses. And this can only be achieved by unified mass mobilization and struggle. There is no other way, all the stimulus packages and bailouts notwithstanding.

Ultimately the movement must regroup ideologically and recognize that it is the capitalist system that has brought the multinational working class and much of the middle class to the brink of ruin.

The only way out of the crisis is to liquidate capitalism itself, which can only be done by the workers and

the oppressed taking into their own hands the economic powerhouse they have built and putting it on a socialist basis—that is, creating a system that functions to satisfy human need rather than to produce profits for a privileged few.

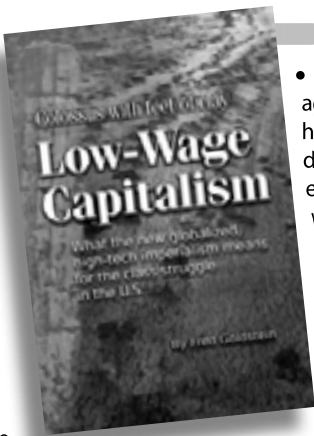
This article is Part 2 of “Data on economic crisis show only one solution,” published in the WW of March 5.

Low-Wage Capitalism

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval.

The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world’s workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.



- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

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Students say: No business with apartheid Israel

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

A divestment teach-in at Temple University on March 5 put technology to use for Palestine as students here spoke directly with students from the Hampshire College divestment movement in Massachusetts through the power of Skype, an Internet telephone program.

Temple Students for Justice in Palestine hosted the teach-in as part of Boycott Israeli Apartheid week. The panel featured Godfrey Sithole, a member of the African National Congress and veteran of the 1980s movement to divest from South Africa, and Adam Horowitz from the U.S. Campaign to End the Occupation of Palestine.

The teach-in was held to reignite a divestment campaign at Temple. It was part of a week of actions that included banner droppings and a protest urging people to “hang up on Motorola” for its complicity in Israel’s human rights violations and military occupation.

Horowitz described the three components of the BDS movement—boycott, divest, sanctions—that is gaining momentum internationally, especially since Israel’s brutal war on Gaza. He explained that the divestment movement must be seen as a tactic in a broader solidarity struggle.

The BDS movement encourages student groups, unions, religious and community organizations to identify ways in which the institutions they are connected with are complicit in Israel’s occupation and wars against the Palestinian people.

The movement against Israeli apartheid borrows from the success of the earlier struggle to weaken apartheid in South Africa through similar tactics. Sithole, who in the 1980s led the movement in Philadelphia to divest from South Africa, stated: “The highlight of that campaign was when people could see the atrocities committed in South Africa. It’s a pity to have to revisit an issue we thought we’d

never have to go back to.” Sithole compared apartheid in South Africa, where racial divisions and inequities were used to enforce policies that benefited the whites in power, to the situation in Israel and occupied Palestine today, where similar racist laws and policies are used to consistently deny rights to Palestinians and Arab people in Israel. “When you see laws similar to what Hitler used against Jewish people, it’s so hard to see the same people who faced the atrocities of Nazi Germany doing this to other people,” Sithole said. “Apartheid in South Africa also copied some of the same laws that were enforced by the Nazis. It’s an issue of control—passbooks in South Africa, checkpoints in Palestine.”

Sithole referred to a recent “60 Minutes” segment that showed Israeli soldiers occupying a Palestinian home in Gaza and controlling when family members could come and go. The soldiers let the children leave for school but refused to let them come home, making the departure of the television crew a condition for their return.

“Bit by bit the international solidarity movement is rising up and it will make a difference,” said Sithole. “Two weeks ago dockworkers in South Africa took a bold step and refused to unload ships from Israel. We were once the ones isolated—called terrorists—but the solidarity we saw with South Africa gave us hope.”

Hampshire students Brian Van Slyke and Jay Cassano from Students for Justice in Palestine joined the program through a Skype hook-up that allowed them to have an open discussion with the Philadelphia audience. Hampshire College was the first college to divest from South Africa in the 1970s and the first campus to protest the war in Afghanistan in 2001. When the Palestinian Civil Society issued a call for divestment from Israel several years ago, students felt they had to live up to that history.

Van Slyke and Cassano described the struggle to get Hampshire’s Board of Trustees subcommittee on respon-

sible investment to finally respond to student pressure earlier this year. First they identified corporations—including Caterpillar, United Technologies, General Electric, ITT, Motorola and Terex—that Hampshire had investments in and that were linked to Israel. SJP showed films, sponsored faculty panels, built a mock wall on campus and set up checkpoints to raise student awareness and participation over the two-year campaign. “You can’t be passive about

the issue,” Van Slyke noted. “Otherwise people will brush you off.” Both pointed out that although Hampshire divested from South Africa in 1977, there was almost a 10-year gap before other schools followed suit. But by 1988 more than 150 institutions had divested. Already students at the University of Mississippi, the University of Rochester and the University of Massachusetts have taken on similar campaigns to divest from Israeli apartheid. □

March unites issues

Continued from page 3 for Progress, who reminded everyone about the domestic violence epidemic; IFCO organizer Alison Bodine, who spoke about the Cuban Five; Katrina survivor Ivy Parker; Bail Out the People organizer Sharon Black; December 12th Movement spokesperson Amadi Ajamu; Julie Fry and Miya Campbell from Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST); Marina Diaz from the May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Worker Rights; Nieves Ayress of La Peña del Bronx; Suzanne Ross from the New York Free Mumia Coalition, who spoke on women political prisoners; and Christina Hilo of FIRE who described how the 60,000 U.S. troops stationed in the Philip-

pines are harming women and children. The marchers went to the site of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire where 146 women workers and girls died in 1911 because the bosses had barricaded the exits to the factory. Along the way the march stopped in front of Bank of America to protest the billions of dollars the government has paid to BofA and other banks. The march also stopped in front of the Kimmel Center of New York University, which students occupied last month to demand a freeze on tuition hikes and divestment from Israel. After the march, people gathered at the Solidarity Center for a delicious meal cooked by male allies and to listen to additional talks and music. □

Support immigrant sisters

Continued from page 3 cial security number and handcuffed by male police. Her paychecks were seized. Transferred to Etowah, she had been there about three weeks. She doesn’t know when she will be deported to Mexico or how she will get back to Chiapas. She has lived in the U.S. for more than eight years. Three sisters-in-law of one of the women brought her pictures of her three young sons, two of whom are U.S. citizens, which she kissed and hugged to her body. The family was involved in a car accident in Cobb County, their vehicle struck by another car and totaled. Cobb County is part of the 287(g) program which authorizes local police to enforce immigration law. When the police arrived at the scene, even though the other driver was at fault, the husband was arrested for lack of a driver’s license. He is now at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Ga., awaiting deportation. The woman and two of her children were taken to the hospital to be treated for injuries received in the accident.

More than two weeks later, police came to their home and arrested the woman, leaving the children to be cared for by a sister-in-law. Her husband had lived in the U.S. for more than 18 years, she for more than nine. The solidarity delegation was organized by Georgia Detention Watch and Human Rights Atlanta. One of the features of the trip was Operation Panty, a campaign to supply the detainees with underwear. Often these women have only what they

were wearing at the time of arrest, which they wash out each night. At Etowah, orange mesh boxers can be bought in the prison store if the detainee has any money, but they are uncomfortable and not suitable to women’s needs. While many of the women are there a matter of weeks, others are held for months. The International Women’s Day solidarity delegation brought hundreds of pairs of cotton briefs, bras, soap, shampoo and other personal items to be distributed to the more than 130 women held at Etowah. Plans are under way to expand Operation Panty to other detention facilities across the U.S. and for coordinated solidarity delegations on Mother’s Day to highlight the cruel separation of families. On March 8, Human Rights Atlanta, in cooperation with community station WRFG 89.3FM, organized a six-hour program on IWD which delved into the history of the day and current struggles and victories in the fight for women’s full participation in economic, political and social life in this country and around the world. Several dozen women activists, reflecting the broad range of women’s activism locally and globally, filled the airwaves with analysis, information and passion in an inspiring discussion of “the rising of the women.”

Mathiowetz, coordinator of the Atlanta International Action Center, was a key organizer of both the IWD Solidarity Delegation to the Etowah Detention Center and the WRFG special radio program.

Boycott Starbucks!



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Protesters from the Gaza Committee in Dearborn, Mich., picketed Starbucks on March 7 over its connections to Israel. The coffee shop chain is also viciously anti-union. The protesters denounced U.S. support for the Zionist settler state, which has been waging a genocidal war against the Palestinian people. An international boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign is targeting Starbucks, whose CEO,

Howard Schultz, received the Israeli 50th Anniversary Tribute Award in 1998 from a Zionist group that promotes settlements on Palestinian land. The campaign is also targeting all institutions and corporations that do business with Israel. The southeastern Michigan-based Gaza Committee is building future actions with this campaign and others that support the Palestinian people.

— Bryan G. Pfeifer

Int’l
Working
Woman’s
Day in
San Antonio

PHOTO:
ESPERANZA CENTER



European court issues arrest warrant

Africans rally behind Sudan president

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Sudan President Omar Hassan al-Bashir visited the North Darfur state capital of El-Fasher on March 8 in defiance of an International Criminal Court warrant issued for his arrest just a few days before. It was the first ICC warrant issued against a sitting head of state. As he addressed a rally of tens of thousands of supporters, the president defied the ICC and its imperialist backers.

The ICC had been threatening to indict al-Bashir for several months, ostensibly over the Sudan government’s handling of the conflict with separatist movements in Darfur, a region in the west. The ICC’s charges allege war crimes in Darfur, but interestingly enough do not include charges of genocide.

President al-Bashir drove from the El-Fasher airport in an open vehicle to the center of the regional capital. Thousands waved flags and photographs of the president while chanting slogans such as “Down, down Ocampo,” in reference to ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo. Other slogans included attacks on the role of the United States in the recent provocations against Sudan. “Down, down America,” the rally participants chanted.

Far from being isolated in this struggle with the ICC, Sudan’s government has support from the African Union and from the Arab League, as well as from the population at home.

Inside the United States, anti-war and anti-imperialist forces should also speak out forcefully against the indictment of the Sudan leader. The ICC and its imperialist backers have no moral, legal or political right to call for the arrest and prosecution of a sitting head of state on the African continent.

The countless war crimes committed over the last seven years in Afghanistan, Iraq and Haiti by the U.S. and its allies have resulted in no investigation, let alone indictments, from the ICC or other so-called international courts based in The Hague in Europe.

The African Union, the organization that represents 53 independent states on the continent, said after a meeting on March 5 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, that it would attempt to halt the indictment because it jeopardizes the ongoing peace efforts between the central government in Sudan and the Darfur rebel groups.

The ICC has mainly targeted former African governmental and rebel leaders, bringing on charges that it is biased in its approach to the interpretation of international law. Moses Wetangul, the Kenyan foreign minister, has stated that the activities of the ICC are “very suspect. Look at the manner in which they have handled African issues. It’s not just the ICC in The Hague, the application of so-called universal jurisdiction in criminal matters has been laced with some racial undertones.”

African Union, Arab League hit ICC

AU chairperson Muammer al-Qaddafi, who is also leader of Libya, told U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon that the “ICC decision of indicting President al-Bashir angered African, Arab and Islamic nations.” Qaddafi said that “the ICC decision is a direct violation of the sovereignty of small independent countries and interference in their domestic affairs.”

Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa, who met with Al-Bashir on March 7 in Khartoum to discuss the im-

plications of the ICC arrest warrant, expressed the organization’s support for the Sudanese leader. Moussa had said earlier that the ICC action had provoked the “anger of the Arab League.”

Additional condemnation of the ICC decision came from the Arab Bar Union on March 8. A statement issued said “the decision lacks legal evidence. The ICC decision is illegal based on the fact that Sudan is not party to the ICC and thereby the court has no jurisdiction over Sudan. ... The ICC indicted Bashir while its prosecutor ignored atrocities committed by Israel on the Palestinian people. This is done despite the many calls for investigations into the crimes committed by Israel against Palestinians.” (Sudanese Media Center, March 8)

The statement urges all African, Arab and Third World countries to quit the court because it has become a tool of the United States.

Another legal structure, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, issued an arrest warrant against head of state Slobodan Milosevic in 1999 to increase pressure against the Yugoslav leader while U.S.-NATO bombs and rockets destroyed his country. Milosevic died under suspicious circumstances imprisoned in The Hague, Netherlands, in March 2006. Milosevic had forced the IFCTY to drop “genocide” charges and had just finished waging a strong defense that exposed U.S. and German imperialist aggression against the former Yugoslav Socialist Federation.

It is quite obvious that the U.S. and NATO powers are using the ICC to attack the Sudanese state for political reasons, just as they used the IFCTY in 1999 against Yugoslavia. Sudan, the African continent’s largest geographic nation-state, is an oil-rich country that has effectively banned U.S. and British oil corporations from exploiting its natural resources. Some 80 percent of the oil concessions in the country are carried out in cooperation with the People’s Republic of China.

Behind the ‘rebel’ movement in Darfur

In the aftermath of the conclusion of a civil war in the south of Sudan between the central government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) in 2003, violence then erupted in the western region of Darfur. The Darfur separatist movement consists of several groups including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A). Since 2003, the SLM and JEM have splintered into several other groups. The Sudanese government says this splintering has complicated its efforts to reach a workable peace accord with the rebels.

Support for the Darfur separatist groups has been advanced by elements within the United States. The New York Times has run numerous articles and editorials that seek to build public support for direct U.S. intervention in Sudan.

Many of the organizations that have played a leading role in the so-called “Save Darfur” campaign also support the State of Israel in its continued occupation of Palestine.

Over the last two years, a well-financed campaign has been waged to build anti-Sudanese sentiment in the United States. A documentary film entitled “The Devil Came on Horseback” features a U.S. military officer who went to Darfur ostensibly as a monitor with the African Union peacekeeping force. The film shows atroc-

ities committed in Darfur and appeals for military involvement by the West in Sudan.

A Feb. 17 article published in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that a Darfur rebel movement leader visited Israel for high-level meetings with Israeli officials. This article also illustrates the base of support that exists among European imperialist powers for the Darfur campaign.

The Haaretz article states, “Abdel Wahid al-Nur is the head of the Sudan Liberation Movement. While in Israel, he met with the senior [Israeli] official and discussed with him the ongoing conflict in Sudan.”

According to the article “Al-Nur came to Israel earlier this month at his own initiative, to attend the annual Herzliya Conference. He came with a group of European Jews, most of them French, who have been active on behalf of the Darfur refugees.”

This article goes on to point out that “Al-Nur fled to France in 2007 and has not been back to Sudan since then. ... In the past, he has spoken in favor of establishing diplomatic ties between Sudan and Israel, and a year ago, he even announced that his movement was opening an office in Tel Aviv, staffed by Sudanese refugees....”

Sudan gov’t stands fast

The rally in Darfur on March 8 came in the aftermath of a government decision to expel a number of non-governmental organizations from Sudan. The president accused the agencies, which are largely

Western-based, of interfering in the internal affairs of the country and carrying out actions in support of the ICC.

President al-Bashir went on to say that “They [the ICC] speak as if they are the masters of the world, as if they determine the fate of all the peoples of the world. ... We will never hand over any Sudanese citizen. We will not kneel to them.” (Al-Jazeera, March 8)

At the same time, the government of Sudan has rejected a U.S. proposal to resolve the crisis. The U.S. has told the Sudanese leader not to stand for re-election in order to activate Article 16 of the ICC statute and halt the indictment.

The Sudan government has rejected this proposal as a blatant interference in the internal affairs of the country. The U.S. is not a party to the ICC either, and consequently has no right to suggest how the Sudanese government handles the current situation.

Since the U.S. intervention into Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti as well as Somalia, millions of people have been killed and wounded. Millions more have been displaced internally and as refugees. Any U.S. or British military intervention in Sudan would only create conditions disastrous to the people of this region.

The role of progressive forces in the U.S. should be focused exclusively on the transformation of the regime in Washington from a state based on oppression and exploitation to a government that supports the interests of the workers and the oppressed both domestically and internationally.□

D’Escoto assails U.S. war crimes

Miguel D’Escoto, current president of the U.N. General Assembly, gave an unusually frank speech to the Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 4 in which he addressed many issues, like U.S. war crimes in Iraq, that no one in such a high position had dared raise before. Here are excerpts from that speech.

I see a profound relationship between access to safe-drinking water and sanitation and the enjoyment of the right to life or health. Indeed, access to water is indispensable for a life in dignity and a prerequisite for the enjoyment of other human rights. ...

Similarly, we must bolster the concept of the right to food, fundamental to the established rights to an adequate standard of living and to health. ...

Gender is another area where I believe the Council and the Assembly can join forces. ... Thanks to the General Assembly’s excellent progress on this score during its last two sessions, the world’s women are now within reach of a dedicated entity, and the beginning of the end of such criminal conditions as feminized poverty, rampant sexual violence and preventable maternal death. ...

Finally, I urge the Council to focus on the profound problems that have been created by the massive violations of human rights in Iraq. Even as the world absorbs the inhumanity of the recent invasion of Gaza, we see Iraq as a contemporary and ongoing example of how the illegal use of force leads inexorably to human suffering and disregard for human rights. It has set a number of precedents that we cannot

allow to stand. The illegality of the use of force against Iraq cannot be doubted as its runs contrary to the prohibition of the use of force in article 2(4) of the U.N. Charter. All pretended justifications notwithstanding, the aggressions against Iraq and Afghanistan and their occupations constitute atrocities that must be condemned and repudiated by all who believe in the rule of law in international relations.

Reliable and independent experts estimate that over one million Iraqis have lost their lives as a direct result of the illegal invasion of their country. The various U.N. human rights monitors have prepared report after report documenting the unending litany of violations from crimes of war, rights of children and women, social rights, collective punishment and treatment of prisoners of war and illegal detention of civilians. These must be addressed to bring an end to the scandalous present impunity. ...

I want to call your attention to the plight of the five Cuban heroes who are still being held in preposterous conditions and serving unheard of jail sentences for having denounced and provided pertinent information concerning terrorist activities being planned in the U.S. by Cuban expatriates against their former Motherland with the support of U.S. authorities. We are very hopeful about meaningful and credible change being brought by the new U.S. administration. The immediate ex-incarceration of the five Cuban heroes would help strengthen our confidence that the promised change is for real.□



U.S. spy ship & China

Just when the capitalist economic meltdown has the world by the throat, the Pentagon reminds us it can pose an even more urgent danger. The threat is of U.S. military aggression against the People’s Republic of China. There are other examples of big, costly and deadly U.S. aggressions: Iraq, Afghanistan and inside Pakistan. But an incident in the South China Sea raises the stakes once again.

Does the Pentagon think it is 1921 when the U.S. Navy could sail a gun-ship up the Yangtse River and force the Chinese to submit? The Chinese Socialist Revolution put an end to those days. Even if it allows foreign investment, the PRC wants no imperialist warships prowling its coastal waters.

The Impeccable, an intelligence-gathering ship that allegedly doesn’t carry large-caliber weapons, is a U.S. warship of a different type. It is leased to a nominally civilian company and staffed by non-military personnel, except for the Navy crew handling its super-sophisticated sonar equipment.

This equipment can map the bottom of the ocean. It can also track submarines, such as the submarines of the Chinese fleet. According to its official description, Impeccable-type ships “are operated by Military Sealift Command to support the anti-submarine warfare mission of the commanders of the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets.”

The Impeccable was plying the waters 75 miles south of China’s Hainan Island, where China has reportedly built a large naval base. The ship was between Hainan and Taiwan, the Chinese island that was once the stronghold of the anti-communist Kuomintang and which the U.S. has used against the PRC. Last summer the Chinese military stopped its dialog with the Pentagon after the U.S. closed a \$6.5 billion arms deal with Taiwan. In a gesture

to the new Obama administration, it recently offered to resume the military talks. Thus the Impeccable was in a sensitive, potential conflict zone, provoking trouble while scouting Chinese submarines.

Admiral Timothy Keating, U.S. commander in the Pacific, shows impeccable arrogance when he says he’s worried about China’s military build-up. Even using the highest figures for the Chinese military budget, it is still about one-tenth of the Pentagon’s. The PRC has made tremendous advances in technology, but its military is basically defensive. Still, the Chinese pushed back when the Impeccable pushed too hard. Using a low-tech response this time, Chinese sailors threw pieces of wood in front of the ship and used poles to foul up its sonar devices, according to Pentagon reports. The Impeccable pulled back.

Washington’s anti-China maneuvers then moved to a different arena: subversion and propaganda. The Dalai Lama has been on the U.S. payroll for close to half a century. With the 50th anniversary approaching of the liberation of Tibet from a feudal theocracy headed by the Dalai Lama, this “spiritual leader” was once again at the top of the news, attacking the PRC.

But it is no longer 1921. The Chinese government was quick both to dismiss the reactionary Dalai Lama and to protest the aggressive incursion of the Impeccable. U.S. and Chinese diplomats may soon be discussing how to handle the capitalist economic crisis that is creating unemployed by the tens of millions around the world. But in a climate where sectors of the U.S. ruling class and especially the Pentagon are itching to find a military solution to the world crisis, the Impeccable incident underlined the risk to millions caused by the Pentagon’s policing of the world’s seas and its continual provocations against China. □

they must be released from detention and house arrest immediately.

Haiti’s National Coordination of Food Supply (CNSA) estimates 3 million Haitians out of 8 million chronically eat less than they need to maintain themselves.

People not only need food, they also need homes. The bishop of Cap Haitien says that over 10,000 buildings, which sheltered 165,337 families in his diocese, have been destroyed.

The Haitian government has refused to issue travel documents because it cannot handle a massive influx of 30,000 people when its economy is in complete shambles. In response, ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] is threatening to keep Haitians under indefinite detention.

Almost all the people that ICE targets are people of color but many Haitian activists feel that they have been singled out because they resist the wishes of the United States.

Many other citizens of countries like Nicaragua and Honduras living in the U.S. have received “temporary protected status” after natural disasters. Haitians should be released from detention and granted the same relief. □

LKP ends strike in Guadeloupe

Negotiations continue in other French-controlled islands

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The Collective Against Exploitation (LKP) signed an agreement with employers on March 4 ending a 43-day general strike in the French-controlled Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. Class struggles continue in the nearby island of Martinique and in La Reunion, an island in the Indian Ocean. All three islands and French Guiana are held by France as “overseas departments.”

Actions in these French colonial possessions since late January have highlighted the impact of the economic crisis that began in the U.S. and the Western capitalist countries. People residing in these areas are subject to higher prices for food, rent and other services, while their salaries are far lower than what prevails in mainland France.

The need for national independence and a break with French imperialist policy underlies the struggles in the four French-run areas.

Since Jan. 20, the LKP coalition, led by the General Union of Workers of Guadeloupe, had engaged the bosses and French colonial authorities through work stoppages and mass rallies. LKP disseminated regular reports through a web site that supplied photographs and daily briefings on strike developments.

Referring to the Jacques Bino Accord, named after a labor unionist killed on Feb. 16 and signed by the LKP and some Guadeloupe-based bosses, union leader Rosan Mounien stated that “From now on, things will no longer be done as before! That’s over! We have come to realize that when we are together, we are stronger! So there is only one thing to do: stay together.” (Links, March 8)

The preamble to the Jacques Bino Accord indicates what the LKP perceives as the underlying reasons for the strike: “[T]he present economic and social situation existing in Guadeloupe results from the perpetuation of the model of the plantation economy.”

The Accord continues: “This economy is based on monopoly privileges and abuses of dominant positions that generate injustices that affect the workers and the endogenous economic actors and block endogenous economic and social development.”

Finally the Accord calls for the end to these problems “by establishing a new economic order enhancing the status of everyone and promoting new social relationships.” (Journal officiel de la Republique Francaise, March 7)

The Accord includes the following: a 200-euro wage increase per month; an average 6 percent reduction in the price of water; the hiring of 22 Guadeloupean teachers on the waiting list; measures to aid farmers and fishers, including the setting aside of 64,000 hectares (158,000 acres) of farmland for future use; lower bank service rates; lower interest rates on loans, which are still being negotiated; a housing rent freeze and ban on evictions; improvements in union rights through the appointment of mediators to resolve outstanding conflicts in some major industries; and provisions for cultural development.

In Martinique, the February 5 Strike Collective is continuing with its negotia-

tions to end the work stoppage. On March 6, a convoy led by the employers sparked anger and violent outbursts from the workers and youth on the island. Most bosses are the so-called Bekes, descendants of French slave-owners who, in conjunction with the metropolitan France-based imperialists, control the economy.

Rebellions highlight Martinique strike

Striking workers clashed with the business owners. Then French riot police launched tear gas against the people. Martinique workers set up roadblocks to halt a convoy of automobiles owned by the bosses, who were demanding that the French authorities end the strike and force strikers back to work.

“The provocation of the beke employers, in wanting to come to Fort-de-France, has produced these predictable effects and that translates into the same arrogance they express in the negotiations,” said Philippe Pierre-Charles, a member of the CMDT union that encompasses hundreds of workers. (International Herald Tribune, March 6)

An agreement reached earlier in the week set a 200-euro monthly pay increase as in Guadeloupe. Other issues involving support for farmers and increased funding for education are still outstanding.

Strike in La Reunion

In La Reunion, workers struck March 5. Following French police provocations, youth began pelting gendarmes with rocks and set up road blockades.

According to a March 5 French Press Agency report: “Hooded youths set up a roadblock near Reunion’s capital, Saint-Denis, and a separate demonstration in the city forced a supermarket to close when protesters tried to burst in.”

Thousands of workers and students marched in Saint-Denis and the town of Saint-Pierre to express their outrage over high prices, rising unemployment and the reduction in wages.

“Our objective has largely been fulfilled,” said Jean-Hugues Ratenon, president of Agir Pou Nou Tout (Act for All of Us), which is part of a coalition consisting of 36 groups (COSPAR) that are fighting for better living conditions and wages. “Reunion is united, unified and together.” (AP, March 5)

The strikers submitted a list of 62 demands to the French colonial authorities. The most prominent on the list was the 200-euro monthly wage increase that was demanded in Guadeloupe and Martinique.

The French prefect of La Reunion stated during the March 5 strike that there would be a decrease in the cost of bottled gas beginning March 12 and a reduction in the price of fuels starting April 1. However, the workers pledged to fight on.

“We will lean on the victory in the [Caribbean] to satisfy the biggest number of our grievances,” said Ivan Hoareau, a labor union leader. “If we continue here, it is to help our buddies in the [Caribbean].” (AP, March 5)

The strike collective in La Reunion announced that if their demands were not met immediately there would be another general one-day work stoppage on March 10. □

Cuba changes, but not according to U.S. script

By Deirdre Griswold

In the vast U.S. spy network, there are undoubtedly whole rooms—maybe even whole buildings—of “experts” whose job is to analyze what’s happening in Cuba. They study all kinds of data, some of it published openly by the Cuban government, some of it provided, or rather sold, by counter-revolutionaries cultivated by U.S. diplomats and handlers.

But these experts don’t just analyze. Their object is to try to find chinks in the armor of that remarkable socialist country with the hope of one day bringing it back into the “free world”—meaning the world

that has been “opened up” like a can of sardines to be freely exploited by U.S. corporations and banks.

Considering how much money Washington spends on its covert and overt war against Cuba, it must be quite embarrassing that its predictions almost always turn out to be false. To judge by the statements of U.S. officials and their parrots in the corporate media, the Cuban Revolution should have been overthrown decades ago.

When Cuba lost its major economic partners with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European states, these experts exulted that Cuba would be next. A fund was set up—its head was

Jeb Bush—that raised at least \$10 billion from those who would invest in what was soon to be a capitalist Cuba. Those disappointed investors must be pretty mad at Bush by now. Wonder what happened to the money?

Cuba went through an extremely difficult period in the early 1990s as it made wrenching adjustments to its economy. Its GDP shrank enormously. There were all kinds of shortages. But there were no rebellions and no mass repression—as would have happened almost anywhere else. The people knew the Cuban leaders were sharing the difficulties with them and that their socialist system was fair and just, despite the onerous circumstances. They didn’t blame the leaders for the problems. Everyone pulled together to get the country back on its feet. There were democratic discussions in all the mass organizations about what to do.

When Fidel Castro, whose life is so closely intertwined with Cuba’s revolution, fell ill a few years ago, there was another rush of predictions emanating from the imperialist colossus to the north. He was already dead. He wasn’t dead but he wouldn’t survive. He would survive but without a mind. The revolution itself wouldn’t survive without Fidel.

Last month, Fidel met with the president of Chile, who was visiting Havana. Photos in the Cuban press showed her with a thinner Fidel standing straight and tall. His regular columns in the newspaper Granma are proof of his keen interest in everything going on, even though he has relinquished his official posts because of his physical condition.

Changes in Cuban government

The latest speculation to run rife in the news media of the U.S. is that a reorganization of several branches of the Cuban government and the replacement of some well-known officials prove that the revolution and the Communist Party are in trouble.

Of course, if all the leaders in the government had remained the same, this would be criticized as showing that Cuba was ossified, bureaucratic, etc. Either way, the propaganda mill in the hostile, imperialist U.S. would grind out its “analysis.”

The announcement of the changes came in an official note from the Council of State. It said that after proposals had been made to Cuba’s legislative body, known as the National Assembly of People’s Power, urging that “a more compact and functional structure is required today, with fewer agencies under the Central State Administration and a better distribution of their duties,” the Council of State had agreed to reorganize a number of agencies and move cadres into different areas of responsibility. (Granma, March 2)

It then listed the changes made, including the names of people who were being removed and those who were replacing them.

A day later, in his column, Fidel Castro said that he had been consulted on the changes, although those in office were under no obligation to do so since he has “renounced the prerogatives of power.” It was a reply to the enemies of Cuba who were trying to pit him and his reputation against his comrades now running the state.

Not much, if any, attention has been paid in the U.S. media to the fact that three of the people who will now head ministries are women, and that two of these women are replacing men. One of them, María del Carmen Concepción González, will be head of the new Ministry of the Food Industry, which merges two formerly separate ministries—agriculture and fisheries, both headed by men—into one new department.

The Council of State says it will “continue studying the government’s current structure with the objective of gradually reducing its magnitude and increasing its effectiveness.” □

To prevent price-gouging Venezuela seizes rice plant from Cargill

By LeiLani Dowell

The government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela ordered the seizure of a rice processing plant owned by U.S. agribusiness giant Cargill on March 4, after the company defied new price-control regulations on rice.

In the face of countrywide food shortages, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has instituted measures to help ensure that people get a fair price on basic food staples like white rice, sugar, milk and other products. He also imposed regulations so that food producers must devote 70 percent of their production to products that fall under the price controls.

An inspection found that Cargill’s Cristal rice plant, in the northwestern

state of Portuguesa, was producing not white rice, but other varieties of rice that were not price-regulated. In addition, the inspection found that the company was circumventing the law by neglecting to print the regulated price on its rice packages.

National Guard troops also occupied a rice mill owned by Venezuela’s biggest food producer, Empresas Polar. Chávez warned the company’s owner, Lorenzo Mendoza, “If you want to take on the government, you’ll find out that this revolution is for real”—meaning the Bolivarian Revolution, Venezuela’s push towards socialism. (Irish Times, March 6) Chávez has previously nationalized the country’s largest telecommunications, electricity and steel companies. □

Supporters rally at hearing for Woodfox

By LeiLani Dowell

Some three dozen supporters of Albert Woodfox rallied in front of the U.S. Court of Appeals in New Orleans on March 3, and then went inside for a hearing on his case. Woodfox, one of the three political prisoners known as the Angola 3, has been in solitary confinement for 36 years after a politically motivated murder conviction.

Supporters, including some from as far as Maine and California, wore black T-shirts that proclaimed “I am Albert Woodfox” and “I am Herman Wallace,” the other member of the Angola 3 who has not been released. A mobile billboard that read “36 years of solitary, 36 years of innocence” circled the courthouse as the proceedings took place.

Woodfox, Wallace and Robert King Wilkerson were Black Panther Party members who organized prisoner protests and strikes against conditions in the notorious Angola penitentiary—a former plantation where guards subjected prisoners to horrific abuses, including sexual enslavement.

According to a March 2 Mother Jones report: “In the early 1970s, Angola—which spans an area the size of Manhattan and is 30 miles from the nearest town—was a lawless, dangerous hellhole. The all-white corrections officers, who were called ‘freemen,’ lived with their families in their own community on the prison grounds, with

inmate-servants they called ‘house boys.’”

After the 1972 stabbing death of prison guard Brent Miller, Woodfox and Wallace were tried and convicted based largely on the testimony of an eyewitness who, after being promised a pardon, changed his initial story to finger the two. Wilkerson, although said by authorities to be linked to the guard’s death, was not charged. All three, however, were placed in solitary confinement for almost three decades. The Angola 3 have received international attention and widespread support.

This past November, U.S. District Judge James Brady ruled that Woodfox’s defense attorneys in his 1998 retrial had failed to provide Woodfox with adequate legal representation and ordered him released. However, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals granted an appeal by Louisiana Attorney General Buddy Caldwell, including a motion to keep Woodfox imprisoned until the 5th Circuit reached a decision on the appeal.

It is expected that the court will take three to six months to reach a decision on the March 3 hearing. The International Coalition to Free the Angola 3 reports that if the court upholds Brady’s ruling, then the state of Louisiana will have 120 days to retry or release Woodfox. If the ruling is overturned, Woodfox would have to start the appeals process anew.

For more information on the Angola 3, visit www.angola3.org. □

Cuban women speak in NYC



The Solidarity Center hosted a meeting and reception on March 4 to welcome two revolutionary women who traveled to New York City from socialist Cuba to participate in International Working Women’s Month activities at the United Nations. Shown in the photo above, Maritzel Gonzalez, a leader of the Federation of Cuban Women, and Dora Carcano, Coordinator of the Regional Office of the Women’s International Democratic Federation, gave inspiring, concrete examples to show how the lives of the Cuban people, especially women, have vastly improved since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution 50 years ago. They also spoke about the ongoing struggle to free the Cuban Five, political prisoners who have been held unjustly in U.S. penitentiaries for more than 10 years. Nieves Ayress from La Peña del Bronx chaired the meeting. Marcia Campos, president of the WIDF visiting from Brazil, gave solidarity greetings.

—Report and photo by Monica Moorehead

EDITORIAL

Estados Unidos sigue perpetuando el racismo

El reciente anuncio de la administración del presidente Obama de que Washington va a boicotear la Conferencia Mundial contra el Racismo, Discriminación Racial, Xenofobia e Intolerancias Relacionadas, debe poner a recapacitar a cualquier persona que piensa que EEUU ha cambiado fundamentalmente su política doméstica y del exterior para proporcionar ayuda a los pueblos o naciones oprimidas. La administración ha dicho que va a boicotear la reunión en Ginebra si l@s participantes no cambian el documento final para borrar todas las referencias a Israel como un estado racista, al igual que cualquier demanda de reparaciones por la esclavitud.

Una cantidad de activistas y grupos, particularmente organizaciones de gente negra están pidiendo a la administración de Obama que reconsidere su boicot de la conferencia de la ONU, que tendrá lugar en Ginebra desde el 20 hasta el 25 de abril de este año. La conferencia en Ginebra es una actividad que le sigue a la histórica conferencia celebrada en Durban, Sudáfrica en el 2001. Esa conferencia adoptó la Declaración y Programa de Acción de Durban (DPAD) que reconoce que “la esclavitud y el comercio de esclav@s son crímenes contra la humanidad... especialmente el comercio transatlántico de esclav@s”. Este fue el primer reconocimiento internacional y promovió el desarrollo de un movimiento para reparaciones que incluyó procesos legales contra varias corporaciones que se beneficiaron del comercio esclavista, así como la demostración en Washington, D.C. en 2002 “Millones para Reparaciones”.

La DPAD afirmó además “el derecho inalienable del pueblo palestino a su autodeterminación.” (www.un.org) Los representantes de los gobiernos estadounidense e israelí se salieron de la conferencia, ostensiblemente para protestar una resolución que condenaba el sionismo por perpetuar el racismo — en nuestra opinión, una resolución muy correcta.

Ambos gobiernos, acostumbrados a reescribir la historia a favor de los intereses de Wall Street, quedaron sumamente avergonzados de que la oposición masiva protestara su política racista en sus países y en el exterior durante la reunión del 2001. Ahora, a pesar de la elección del primer presidente negro en la historia de los Estados Unidos, ni Washington ni Tel Aviv desean correr el riesgo de enfrentarse con el mismo tipo de escrutinio en la conferencia de Ginebra.

En los Estados Unidos, el racismo y la opresión nacional se han intensificado desde 2001 — expuesto por los números desproporcionados de mujeres de color victimizadas por los préstamos hipotecarios abusivos, la brutalidad policiaca y el encarcelamiento acrecentados de gente negra y latina, y del nivel astronómico de desempleo en las comunidades de color. Aunque el pueblo negro sufre desproporcionadamente como resultado de la crisis financiera y económica, tal como fue descrito en el reporte de “El Estado del Sueño (Americano) 2009”, publicado por Unidos por una Economía Justa, el llamado a reparaciones es algo que la clase dominante no puede soportar.

Según el Washington Post, “oficiales de la ONU han exhortado a la administración de Obama a participar en la conferencia de revisión, diciendo que la elección del primer presidente afro-americano presenta a los Estados Unidos una oportunidad para inspirar a otras minorías del mundo y poner al relieve el progreso estadounidense.” (20 de febrero) Pero es el miedo a exponer el hecho de que en realidad muy poco progreso ha habido, lo que ha frenado a la administración.

Mientras tanto, Israel acaba de sufrir una gran derrota política, resultado de su ataque brutal en Gaza. Luego de semanas de manifestaciones masivas por todo el mundo condenando a Israel; la inhabilidad de Israel de destruir a Hamas después de 22 días de ataque genocida contra el pueblo palestino; y un movimiento creciente pidiendo el boicot, desinversión y sanciones — lo último que desea Israel es llamar más la atención a la naturaleza de apartheid de la ocupación israelí. Y Estados Unidos no puede desafiar el racismo de Israel, su estado cliente, a la misma vez que perpetúa ese racismo con financiamiento militar y apoyo político.

Lo fundamental es que una política extranjera estadounidense hacia Israel y Palestina — y hacia el resto del Oriente Medio, motivada por las ganancias — y su política doméstica hacia el pueblo negro y otra gente de color, no solamente ha mantenido el mismo racismo institucional a pesar de la nueva administración. Este racismo se ha intensificado como respuesta a la crisis de capitalismo. □

El movimiento se amplía para boicotear Israel

Por Kathy Durkin

El Llamado Unificado Palestino para el Boicoteo, Desinversión y Sanciones (BDS) contra Israel está siendo adoptado por sindicatos, universidades y fuerzas políticas en muchos continentes.

Un enfoque mundial se está organizando para el 30 de marzo, “Día de Acción Global para Boicotear, Despojar y Sancionar”, cuando se le ha pedido a las fuerzas progresistas que lleven a cabo protestas concretas y fuertes para avanzar esta importante campaña de solidaridad con el pueblo palestino.

Muchas acciones y compromisos con la campaña BDS se han realizado el pasado mes.

Inspirando a activistas mundialmente, los prisioneros políticos vascos en la prisión de Fresnes en Francia hablaron fuertemente en solidaridad con el pueblo de Gaza, a pesar de amenazas de represalia. Declararon, “Nosotros los prisioneros políticos vascos, rehusamos comprar productos [de Israel] [en la cantina] para mostrar nuestra solidaridad con el pueblo palestino.” (www.bds-movement.net)

En el Día para Boicotear a Israel, el 14 de febrero, líneas de protestas rodearon supermercados en Dinamarca. L@s manifestantes dirigieron el boicot a los productos vendidos por compañías israelitas, especialmente Carmel Agrexco, el mayor exportador israelí de frutas y vegetales, los cuales son cosechados en la ocupada Palestina.

La ciudad de Estocolmo, en Suecia, ha terminado su contrato con Veolia Transport porque está conectada con un proyecto de tranvía en Israel.

La campaña BDS ha repercutido en el movimiento sindical de Noruega. Seis importantes sindicatos y muchas organizaciones noruegas están llamando a una campaña para terminar las inversiones estatales en Israel. El sindicato de Trabajadores del Comercio y Oficinas, el sindicato más grande de trabajadores/as de Noruega, ha pedido a los empresarios que dejen de comprar productos israelitas.

La Confederación Noruega de Sindicatos, que representa el 20% de la población del país, condenó los bombardeos e invasión israelí en Gaza e hizo un llamado para la convocación de fuertes protestas. (Más de 28 ciudades tuvieron protestas durante el asedio.) Este sindicato también expresó su solidaridad con COSATU, cuando los trabajadores portuarios surafricanos rehusaron descargar un barco israelita el mes pasado.

El sindicato de trabajadores/as de la industria metalúrgica más grande de Italia,

la FIOM, que representa 360.000 miembros, ha hecho un llamado para convocar tribunales por crímenes de guerra contra los oficiales israelitas por el asedio de Gaza. El sindicato también exigió la terminación de contratos entre Israel e Italia, y entre Israel y la Unión Europea.

Un boicot académico de “todas las instituciones israelitas participando en la ocupación [de Gaza]”, fue anunciado en un llamado por much@s académic@s franceses, quienes están promoviendo a gran escala la campaña BDS y quieren ver juicios por crímenes de guerra contra los líderes israelitas.

La Asociación de Consumidores de Turquía hizo un llamado nacional para establecer un boicot contra los productos vendidos por compañías israelitas, estadounidenses y británicas que “abiertamente declaren su apoyo y cooperación con Israel [y] aquellas que transfieren fondos al ejército israelita”. Entre las compañías enumeradas están Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Starbucks, McDonalds y Burger King. (bds-movement.net)

La Asociación de Trabajadores Sociales de Mauricio ha hecho un llamado a la eliminación en las tiendas de productos israelíes, incluyendo comestibles y medicinas y también a un boicot.

Delegad@s de l@s trabajadoras/as de las universidades de la rama en Ontario del Sindicato de Empleados Públicos Canadiense, que representa 200.000 emplea-

d@s del sector público, acaba de adoptar una resolución pidiendo un boicot académico contra Israel. Llama también a una campaña educativa sobre el “apartheid” de Israel y pide entre otras cosas, que el sindicato apoye al movimiento BDS.

La campaña BDS de Australia ha ganado momento, especialmente durante semanas recientes en Sydney. Han ocurrido acciones directas, organización en los campos universitarios, y la planificación de campañas a largo plazo. Un blanco clave es la empresa de Chocolates Max Brenner, una compañía con dueños israelíes del grupo transnacional Strauss, que apoya la Brigada del Golán de las fuerzas de defensa de Israel, célebres por sus ofensivas despiadadas en Gaza, la Franja Occidental y el Líbano.

Y a partir del 1º de marzo, la ciudad de Tulkarem, que está ubicada en la Franja Occidental Ocupada, está iniciando una campaña total de boicot de comidas y otros productos israelíes.

La semana entre el primero hasta el 8 de marzo será la quinta Semana anual del Apartheid Israelí. Será marcada con actos culturales y protestas en universidades y campos de refugiados en la Franja Occidental Ocupada, y en varias ciudades alrededor del mundo. Las actividades ayudarán a llamar atención a la campaña BDS bajo el tema de “Unid@s con el Pueblo de Gaza”. Para más información vea: <http://stopthewall.org>. □

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Luchemos contra el racismo y la brutalidad.

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